

DMH EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT – JOELLEN PERKINS

We're starting up a new set of stories spotlighting LACDMH employees who shine! This week, we're featuring...

JOELLEN PERKINS MHC District Chief, Service Area 1



JoEllen started her career with Los Angeles County in 1984. She relocated from Northern California so her husband could make movies. She began with the Department of Children and Family Services that year as a temporary CSW in the Antelope Valley. After a few months of CSW field work, she transferred to MacLaren Children's Center to complete the clinical hours required for her LCSW.

In 1985, she became an employee at the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) when the clinical staff at MacLaren moved to the Department of Mental Health. In 1986, JoEllen joined Paul McIver as one of the first AB3632 assessors. She briefly left LACDMH in 1987, but returned in 1988 to work with Paul again. She says the rest is history.

What do you like about your job? "I am a service area District Chief and my passion lies in working with the community to develop, implement and improve services and relationships. I am fortunate to have a management team and service area partners that share my passion for the grass roots work that we do and the vision for how to make things work."

Who/what inspires you? "I am inspired by the people we serve. I am inspired by the staff that works tirelessly to adjust, adapt and deliver services in conditions that can sometimes feel less than optimal. I am also inspired by the community and the willingness to rally for a cause, respond to a crisis and plan for the future."

What quote inspires you? "There is a quote I have on my wall from an announcer I heard during a volleyball game at the summer Olympics. He said, 'Sometimes you make all the right moves, and the ball still hits the floor.' I thought that was profound for a volleyball game, but appreciated the simplicity of the sentiment. We sometimes have to be reminded that we are only a part of the process – and that there are things that are outside of our control."

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? "Horses, horses, horses – and alpaca. I am involved with Equine Assisted Growth & Learning. Together, with my partners (equine and human), we provide treatment, workshops and team building. I also ride, train and generally

hang out with my very large posse! I also have recently learned to spin alpaca fiber into yarn. So, I look forward to shearing season and new batches of fiber.”

Do you have any words of wisdom for other LACDMH employees? “Breathe! Find your strengths. Enjoy the journey.”